

# SELF CARE

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## Weight Control: The Power of Healthy Choices

### What is a healthy weight for me?

This is a tough question to answer. Even though many people talk about weight, what really matters is how much of your body weight is fat. The body mass index (BMI) is an approximate measure of body fat. It is based on your height and weight. A BMI between 19 and 25 is considered a normal amount of body fat. If someone's BMI is 25 to 29.9, that person is said to be overweight. A person is said to be obese if his or her BMI is 30 or higher. The higher your BMI, the greater your risk for diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, arthritis, and certain cancers.

### How can I lower my BMI?

The best way to lower your BMI is to reduce the total number of calories you take in and to be more physically active. Long-term success is not about finding the "right" diet. It's about identifying your behaviors that have contributed to taking in more calories than your body needs. It is also about making a plan to develop healthier eating and physical activity habits. For example, you may eat when you're under stress rather than when you're hungry. Choosing another activity to do when you feel stressed, such as taking a walk, may help you break the habit of eating at those times.

You're more likely to make changes in your habits if you set a specific goal for yourself. For example, instead of saying, "I'm going to lose 20 pounds," decide that you'll be more active every other day of the week. Be specific about what kind of activity you'll do and which days you'll do it. Your new goal might be: "During my lunch hour on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, I'm going to walk for half an hour in the park." Once your new healthy behavior becomes a habit, you can move on to another goal.

### Why is physical activity important?

Physical activity builds muscles, so even if you don't lose pounds, you will look and feel better when you are more active. Being active also reduces your risk of chronic diseases like heart disease and diabetes, even if you are overweight.

### Important websites to visit

1. Body Mass Index (BMI) information can be found at [www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/bmi/](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/bmi/)
2. Fitness, nutrition and interactive health calculators can be found at <http://sc.buildingbetterhealth.com/> - click on **Cool Tools** to access the various health calculators.

